

1 (Three Times Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism comprising:

a first holding member arranged to hold a first optical element;

a second holding member arranged to hold a second optical element;

a plurality of coupling members arranged to couple said first holding member and said second holding member, and to permit relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member to be varied in a vertical direction in the process of being coupled;

a plurality of urging members respectively disposed between each of said plurality of coupling members and said second holding member, and arranged to urge and press said second holding member against said first holding member at least when said plurality of coupling members are in the process of coupling said first holding member and said second holding member through alignment of respective optical axes of the first optical element and the second optical element; and

a deformation restricting member disposed between said plurality of coupling members and said first holding member and arranged to restrict deformation of said first holding member while relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member are in the process of being varied, when said plurality of coupling members are in the process of coupling said first holding member and said second holding member.

2. (Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 1, wherein each coupling member is a screw arranged to couple said first holding member and said second holding member by press contact.

3. (Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 2, wherein each urging member is a deformable washer that generates an elastic force, and through which a shaft of said screw pierces.

6. (Twice Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 1, wherein each urging member is disposed between a coupling member and said deformation restricting member.

7. (Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 1, further comprising a friction preventing member disposed between each coupling member and said second holding member and arranged to prevent generation of a frictional force between said coupling member and said second holding member when said coupling member is in the process of coupling said first holding member and said second holding members.

8. (Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 7, wherein movement of said friction preventing member within a plane of varying the relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member is restricted.

9. (Twice Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 7, wherein said friction preventing member serves also as said deformation restricting member.

10. (Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 7, wherein each urging member is disposed between a coupling member and said friction preventing member.

11. (Three Times Amended) An optical apparatus comprising:
an apparatus body; and
an optical-element holding mechanism including:

a first holding member arranged to hold a first optical element;

a second holding member arranged to hold a second optical element;

a plurality of coupling members arranged to couple said first holding member and said second holding member, and to permit relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member to be varied in a vertical direction in the process of being coupled;

a plurality of urging members respectively disposed between each of said plurality of coupling members and said second holding member, and arranged to urge and press said second holding member against said first holding member at least when said plurality of coupling members are in the process of coupling said first holding member and said second holding member through alignment of respective optical axes of the first optical element and the second optical element; and

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a deformation restricting member disposed between said plurality of coupling members and said first holding member and arranged to restrict deformation of said first holding member while relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member are in the process of being varied, when said plurality of coupling members are in the process of coupling said first holding member and said second holding member.

19. (Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism comprising:
a first holding member arranged to hold a first optical element;
a second holding member arranged to hold a second optical element;
a plurality of coupling members arranged to couple said first holding member and said second holding member, and to permit relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member to be varied in the process of being coupled;

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a plurality of urging members respectively disposed between each of said plurality of coupling members and said second holding member, and arranged to urge and press said second holding member against said first holding member at least when said plurality of coupling members are in the process of coupling said first holding member and said second holding member through alignment of respective optical axes of the first optical element and the second optical element; and

a deformation restricting member disposed between said plurality of coupling members and said first holding member and arranged to restrict deformation of said first holding member while relative positions of said first holding member and said

second holding member are in the process of being varied, when said plurality of coupling members are in the process of coupling said first holding member and said second holding member;

wherein said deformation restricting member includes a plurality of first through hole portions for receiving one of said plurality of coupling members;

wherein said first holding member includes an extended portion extended in the direction of the optical axis of said first optical element, said extended portion including a plurality of abutting faces and a plurality of receiving portions for receiving the plurality of coupling members; and

wherein said second holding member includes a plurality of flanges extending in a direction perpendicular to the optical axis, each flange abutting against one of said plurality of abutting faces of said first holding member, each flange including a second through hole portion for receiving a respective one of said plurality of coupling members.

20. (Amended) An optical apparatus comprising:

an apparatus body; and

an optical-element holding mechanism including:

a first holding member arranged to hold a first optical element;

a second holding member arranged to hold a second optical element;

a plurality of coupling members arranged to couple said first holding member and said second holding member, and to permit relative positions of said first

holding member and said second holding member to be varied in the process of being coupled;

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a plurality of urging members respectively disposed between each of said plurality of coupling members and said second holding member, and arranged to urge and press said second holding member against said first holding member at least when said plurality of coupling members are in the process of coupling said first holding member and said second holding member through alignment of respective optical axes of the first optical element and the second optical element; and

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a deformation restricting member disposed between said plurality of coupling members and said first holding member and arranged to restrict deformation of said first holding member while relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member are in the process of being varied, when said plurality of coupling members are in the process of coupling said first holding member and said second holding member;

wherein said deformation restricting member includes a plurality of first through hole portions for receiving one of said plurality of coupling members;

wherein said first holding member includes an extended portion extended in the direction of the optical axis of said first optical element, said extended portion including a plurality of abutting faces and a plurality of receiving portions for receiving the plurality of coupling members; and

wherein said second holding member includes a plurality of flanges extending in a direction perpendicular to the optical axis, each flange abutting against one

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of said plurality of abutting faces of said first holding member, each flange including a second through hole portion for receiving a respective one of said plurality of coupling members.

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21. (Amended) An optical coupling mechanism, comprising:

- a first holding member that holds a first optical element having a first optical axis;
- a second holding member that holds a second optical element having a second optical axis;
- a plurality of coupling members arranged to couple said first holding member and said second holding member at a position, selected within a range of relative movement between said first holding member and said second holding member, in which the first optical axis and the second optical axis are substantially aligned;
- a plurality of urging members, respectively disposed between each of said plurality of coupling members and said second holding member, that urge and press said second holding member against said first holding member within the range of relative movement between said first holding member and said second holding member; and
- a deformation restricting member, disposed between each of said plurality of coupling members and said first holding member, that restricts deformation of the first holding member within the range of relative movement between said first holding member and said second holding member;

wherein said deformation restricting member includes a plurality of first through hole portions for receiving one of said plurality of coupling members;

wherein said first holding member includes an extended portion extended in the direction of the optical axis of said first optical element, said extended portion including a plurality of abutting faces and a plurality of receiving portions for receiving the plurality of coupling members; and

wherein said second holding member includes a plurality of flanges extending in a direction perpendicular to the optical axis, each flange abutting against one of said plurality of abutting faces of said first holding member, each flange including a second through hole portion for receiving a respective one of said plurality of coupling members.

22. (Amended) An optical apparatus comprising:

- an apparatus body; and
- an optical coupling mechanism, comprising:
 - a first holding member that holds a first optical element having a first optical axis;
 - a second holding member that holds a second optical element having a second optical axis;
 - a plurality of coupling members arranged to couple said first holding member and said second holding member at a position, selected within a range of relative movement between said first holding member and said second holding member, in which the first optical axis and the second optical axis are substantially aligned;
 - a plurality of urging members, respectively disposed between each of said plurality of coupling members and said second holding member, that urge and press said

second holding member against said first holding member within the range of relative movement between said first holding member and said second holding member; and

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a deformation restricting member, disposed between each of said plurality of coupling members and said first holding member, that restricts deformation of the first holding member within the range of relative movement between said first holding member and said second holding member;

wherein said deformation restricting member includes a plurality of first through hole portions for receiving one of said plurality of coupling members;

wherein said first holding member includes an extended portion extended in the direction of the optical axis of said first optical element, said extended portion including a plurality of abutting faces and a plurality of receiving portions for receiving the plurality of coupling members; and

wherein said second holding member includes a plurality of flanges extending in a direction perpendicular to the optical axis, each flange abutting against one of said plurality of abutting faces of said first holding member, each flange including a second through hole portion for receiving a respective one of said plurality of coupling members.